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American Library Association

December 20, 1999

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW, Room TW-A325
Washington, D.C. 20554

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

RE: CC Docket No. 99-301
Reply Comments of the American Library Association

Dear Ms. Salas:

On the behalf of the American Library Association, we enclose the Association's Reply Comments in the above-referenced docket. We request that each Commissioner receive a personal copy of this Reply Comment.

Also enclosed is a 3.5 diskette formatted in an IBM compatible format using WordPerfect for Windows.

Please call with any questions.

Very truly yours,



Emily Sheketoff,
Executive Director, Washington Office

Enclosure

cc: Tom Power, Senior Legal Advisor to Chair Kennard
Helgi Walker, Senior Legal Advisor to Commissioner Furchgott-Roth
Rick Chessen, Senior Legal Advisor to Commissioner Tristani
Marsha McBride, Senior Legal Advisor to Commissioner Powell
David Goodfriend, Senior Legal Advisor to Commissioner Ness

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Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

In the Matter of)
)
Local Competition)
and Broadband Reporting)
)

CC Docket No. 99-301

REPLY COMMENTS OF
AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Submitted,

December 20, 1999

1. INTRODUCTION

The American Library Association (ALA) respectfully submits its Reply Comments in the above referenced proceeding regarding the collection of data on the pace and extent of local competition and on the deployment of advanced telecommunications capability or broadband services. The American Library Association, founded in 1876, is the oldest and largest library association in the world. With a membership of more than 57,000 librarians, library trustees, library educators, friends of libraries and other interested persons from every state, ALA is the chief advocate for the people of the United States in their search for the highest quality of library and information services.

The American Library Association commends the Commission for its proposal to collect broadband deployment and local competition data. We applaud the FCC's goal to collect timely and reliable information in a single data collection program. The data collected would assist ALA and the broader research community by cumulating the information needed for research and analysis of advanced services. The research and analysis would contribute to policy development regarding the national information infrastructure, E-rate, and other technology issues.

ALA is a strong supporter of the principles related to increasing and improving access to the Internet and advanced telecommunications capabilities, generally, and to providing access to those in underserved areas. ALA has a long tradition of ensuring access to the Internet and advanced information services. Libraries were the first to provide public access to various electronic information sources and the Internet in communities

throughout the United States. These traditions and concerns are the basis for our tremendous concern that uneven access to advanced services and capabilities/broadband will become the newest contributor to the widening of the digital divide for Americans already in underserved areas (e.g., remote, urban and rural low-income, and rural areas, and tribal lands). We anticipate that high-speed access to advanced services and applications through broadband will become a central issue in ensuring access to the Internet for those who do not have access.

The Association, additionally, views the broadband access issues as a priority that can and should be addressed prior to nationwide mass deployment. That is, it is easier to address possible broadband deployment inequities while they are in the making rather than after the fact. Therefore, collecting data on broadband deployment would provide the information needed to not only determine the extent and pace of deployment in traditionally underserved areas, but also to facilitate research and analysis for the development of policy. For example, the universal service program provides discounts for libraries and schools to get access to advanced services. Research and analysis of broadband deployment will be critical in identifying trends, patterns, and other areas in which policies are needed to facilitate universal access to advanced services.

The American Library Association (ALA) respectfully submits these Reply Comments to elaborate on and support points that have been raised by the other filers regarding the above referenced proceeding. Based on a review of comments filed in this matter, certain concerns and conclusions warrant reply.

2. We agree with and support the FCC's view that it is critical to collect timely and accurate data on the pace and extent of broadband deployment. We also agree with the FCC that the data should indicate the deployment of broadband in all geographic areas -- urban and rural, in all of the states. In addition to the need to document the progress of competition, there is a public interest, specifically for the purpose of knowing where the digital divide exists, in documenting to the greatest extent possible where broadband is deployed. The extent to and pace at which deployment reaches rural, remote (including tribal lands), and low-income areas (both urban and rural) is central to developing the most effective and appropriate solutions to the digital divide problem. There is also a public interest in the ability of the research communities (including other federal agencies, the ALA, academia, and others) to have the data needed to explore and document advanced services and its impact on society. This type of research not only serves in the public interest, but also would assist members of Congress, the executive branch, and the private sector to better understand and make policies regarding the deployment of advanced services/broadband.
3. We agree with those comments that urge and support:
 - A. a mandatory reporting and data collection program;
 - B. a single data collection program capable of providing aggregate data on broadband deployment to the public; and
 - C. full public disclosure of the disaggregated data.

4. We agree with recommendations to require all carriers and other entities that provide broadband services to participate in reporting on broadband deployment and services provided. This level of reporting is needed to identify and address possible inequalities in deployment in urban and rural areas since smaller and non-telecom entities may be the only provider of broadband in rural and remote areas. We therefore recommend collecting data from all providers of broadband services.
5. We agree with recommendations to collect data on services provided by entities with less than 1,000 lines and subscribers nationally and concur that such data would be useful in understanding the pace and extent of deployment in rural and remote areas. We understand the burden this may place on smaller entities, but recognize greater importance of identifying deployment of broadband to areas that larger entities may not reach.
6. We concur with recommendations to not exempt smaller entities from requirements to report fully on broadband deployment. To lessen the burden, we recommend requiring annual reports from entities defined as "smaller entities." It is critical to fully measure deployment of broadband services provided by the smaller entities -- including Local Exchange Carriers (LECs), urban and rural, with less than 50,000 lines or 1,000 subscribers nationwide; and from mobile telephony providers, cable companies and others regardless of the number or lines or subscribers.

7. We agree with and support the FCC requiring reporting on broadband deployment at the zip code level. We recommend census block or congressional district level data, if zip code data is not selected. There is a critical public interest served in collecting broadband deployment data. Collecting data at the state level only would indicate differences between states, but would fail to disclose deployment within a state. In fact, data on information technology infrastructure available in some states indicate significant disparities within states, within low-income urban areas, between urban and suburban areas, and within remote and tribal areas of a state. Yet most states do not collect technology deployment data. While state level data is better than no data, it is a national imperative in addressing the digital divide to know where and how fast broadband deployment is taking place in traditionally underserved areas. State level data, would fall short of indicating where deployment is or is not taking place. We agree that for research and analysis purposes, collecting zip code level data, is the most useful data collection level. In addition, zip code level data would inform the development of national, state, and local policy solutions to the digital divide.
8. We agree that data concerning broadband needs to be reported and collected nationally, uniformly, and consistently by the FCC. We contend that the FCC is the best entity to conduct this data collection program, rather than any other federal or state, or private entity. In research, one of the biggest problems is uniformity and consistency of the data used for analysis. It is, therefore, important for the FCC to develop a mandatory and nationally uniform and consistent data collection program in this area.

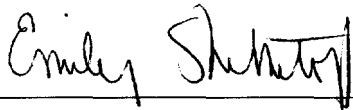
9. We agree with recommendations to annually report and collect data on broadband deployment, especially to ease the burden on smaller entities, as long as the data includes zip code level data.
10. As mentioned, we agree with the FCC that zip code level data should be collected to truly reveal the extent and location of broadband deployment. We also suggested that if zip code level data is not used, that census block or congressional district level data would be acceptable substitutes. However, for consistency and uniformity, we strongly recommend the use of only of the discreet levels of data -- either zip code, or census block, or congressional district -- throughout the data collection program.
11. We recommend semi-annual state level data being reported. We contend that since the deployment of technology can move at a fast pace, annual reporting is not sufficient. However, to ease the burden on the covered entities, state level data can provide an interim level of information between annual reporting at the more discreet levels (e.g., zip code).
12. We support and recommend including questions in the survey that identify: number of lines, subscribers, types of services, speeds of the services (both directions and speeds above conventional modem speeds), information carrying capacity, other indicators of supply and demand, and the geographic location of the lines.

13. We agree that the type of data listed above and all disaggregated data should not be considered confidential data. Further, we agree with recommendations that all data collected by the FCC in this program be considered public information and therefore subject to full public disclosure.
14. We agree that all data should be disaggregated and cumulated by the FCC and not by the private sector or the telecom industry.
15. We suggest that reporting and public disclosure of some of the data by the FCC may best be provided as a geographic information system (GIS) map of broadband deployment linked with state tables containing the data at the most discrete level (e.g., zip code, census block, or congressional district). Further, we recommend that the FCC provide full public disclosure of the data on its website, by CD-ROM, and in hard copy.
16. To ease the burden on smaller entities and to generally facilitate ease of filing, in addition to electronic filing by email (which we support), it may be useful to provide the survey form online and allow a save feature for completing the form over a time period. For those entities without Internet access on their site, a telephone survey (similar to some of the state income tele-tax services) may be useful.
17. We agree with and support the FCC continuing the survey for at least five years. We do not agree with recommendations to sunset the program in five years. We

recommend evaluating the data collection program every two years to determine the usefulness of modifying the survey to ensure the collection of needed information and the survey's success in identifying broadband deployment to underserved areas.

The American Library Association thanks the Commission for its time and stands ready to assist in whatever way it can in the coming proceeding.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Emily Sheketoff", positioned above a horizontal line.

Emily Sheketoff
Executive Director
American Library Association Washington Office
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 403
Washington, DC 20004

December 20, 1999